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ABSTRACT

This guide provides principals with useful information about hiring teachers, including checklists for organizing the search for qualified candidates, recommendations on how to identify suitable applicants, and sample interview questions. In an increasingly competitive employment environment, school district personnel systems can help, or hinder, a principal's efforts to hire qualified teachers. The best hiring systems identify key attitudes, behaviors, and skills desired in classroom teachers, screen for these characteristics during all stages of candidate evaluation, ensure compliance with relevant laws, reserve the labor-intensive aspects of evaluation for only the most promising candidates, and provide decisionmakers with timely, pertinent information. Teacher preparation programs have grown more demanding since the 1970s, improving the pool of teacher candidates while making traditional identification and hiring practices obsolete. Hiring is too important to be attempted at the last minute, and planning for spring and summer interviews should begin the previous fall. Effective interviewing requires planning, including the identification of needed job skills, standards for reviewing applications, telephone interviews, pre-interviews, and other time-saving steps. Behavior-based interviewing includes a variety of important steps to consider in such areas as a list of job requirements and questions about curriculum, instruction, planning, classroom management, homework, grading, approaches to communicating, professional development, and concluding interviews. Hiring is merely the first of several important steps in effective personnel management. Schools must provide administrative support, welcome new teachers, maintain frequent contact, and allow time for professional development and relationship formation. (Contains 27 references.)(TEJ)

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How to Interview, Hire, and Retain High-Quality New Teachers

Principals

ED 450 461

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Essentials *for* Principals

How to Interview, Hire, and Retain High-Quality New Teachers

NAESP

National Association of Elementary School Principals

National Association of Elementary School Principals

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The 28,500 members of the National Association of Elementary School Principals provide administrative and instructional leadership for public and private elementary and middle schools throughout the United States, Canada, and overseas. Founded in 1921, NAESP is today a vigorously independent professional association with its own headquarters building in Alexandria, Virginia, just across the Potomac River from the nation's capital. From this special vantage point, NAESP conveys the unique perspective of the elementary and middle school principal to the highest policy councils of our national government. Through national and regional meetings, award-winning publications, and joint efforts with its 50 state affiliates, NAESP is a strong advocate both for its members and for the 33 million American children enrolled in preschool, kindergarten, and grades 1 through 8.

Authors: Mary C. Clement,
with the assistance of Joseph J. D'Amico and Nancy Protheroe

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Foreword

Educators decry the failure of educational research to address practical school problems, even though it is clear that school leaders want research-driven guidance as a tool to help them function effectively. There exist today many key research findings that could benefit the working principal, but for the most part they do not appear in user-friendly formats. Consequently, today's school principals—who are eager for information and "how to" advice—have few opportunities to apply research to their day-to-day challenges. This disconnect between research and practice seems even more pronounced when it comes to the nuts-and-bolts topics of leading and managing a school.

To address this situation, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) has made a commitment to produce a series of research-based guides called *Essentials for Principals.* Aimed at the busy working principal, the series will focus on operational issues of vital importance to effective leadership. Each *Essentials* guide will provide research-based information and helpful "how-to" tips in plain English tailored for quick reading and easy application.

Given the environment principals find themselves in today, which is characterized by the constant demand for improved test scores by students, there may not be a more "essential" duty a principal must perform than the hiring of high-quality staff. Therefore, the first in our new series is devoted to finding, hiring, and keeping high-quality teachers.

How to Interview, Hire, and Retain High-Quality New Teachers will put at your fingertips useful checklists for organizing your search for teachers, recommendations on how to identify applicants to interview, and sample interview questions you may adopt or adapt for your own use.

While each new *Essentials for Principals* guide will be research-based, it will also contain "expert" advice from practitioners in the relevant field and examples of how the expert opinion is applied by school administrators. Each guide will include step-by-step suggestions for following the expert advice (accompanied by reproducible checklists and forms) along with a list of references.

NAESP is attempting to close the divide between research and practice. We are excited about the prospects for the *Essentials for Principals* series, and warmly welcome your recommendations for topics to be added to the series. We also look forward to your suggestions for improvement and accounts of how you have put the *Essentials* series to work for you.

Vincent L. Ferrandino
Executive Director
National Association of Elementary School Principals

About this *Essentials for Principals* Publication

This *Essentials* guide is about hiring the best new teachers you can. In it we hope to provide guidance and some helpful hints to make the hiring process less taxing for busy principals. Both the content and format have been designed to create a practical, easy-to-use guide to this critical component of every principal's job. In addition to a comprehensive discussion of the important issues, it includes:

- examples that you can use as they are or adapt to fit your own situation;
- forms and other materials to copy and use in your hiring process; and
- space for you to jot down notes, reminders, and ideas.

Our goal for the *Essentials for Principals* series is to produce resources that are *not* read once and put on a shelf. Instead, we hope that you find this guide a useful reference on a continuing basis, one to which you add value through your notes and comments as you refine your own procedures.

In this *Essentials* guide, *How to Interview, Hire, and Retain High-Quality New Teachers*, we begin by showing how the picture of teacher hiring has changed and by describing who becomes a teacher these days and why they choose teaching. We provide a recruitment and hiring schedule to follow and offer suggestions as to what you might do, month-by-month, to ensure you get the high-quality teachers you want. We also give you tips to help in the pre-interview stage of the process.

Next we come to the heart and soul of this guide and describe a unique interview strategy called *behavior-based interviewing*. We explain some behavior-based interviewing techniques you can use when hiring teachers and provide some sample behavior-based questions. Finally, we briefly outline steps you can take to make sure you keep good teachers on your staff.

Jim's Story: A History Lesson

In the early 1970s, Jim was the principal of both an elementary school and a high school in a small Midwestern town. He says that hiring new teachers was one of the more pleasant aspects of his job. He typically didn't have any difficulty finding new teachers. He would simply call three or four of the universities in the state and post the opening in their placement bulletins. A sufficient number of applications would always appear on his desk from these postings and from teachers living in the area who had heard of the position "by word of mouth."

Jim read the cover letters and resumés to make sure that candidates were indeed certified for the position, then sorted them by their college of preparation, preferring one of the regional state schools for elementary teachers and the big research university for math, science, and foreign language majors. He looked for a little experience so that he wouldn't have to do quite as much coaching of the new hire, but also realized that the board of education didn't want too many "expensive" new teachers with a master's degree. He looked at transcripts, noted grades, and read letters of recommendation, especially if they were from principals or teachers whom he knew. To get an interview with Jim, a candidate had to be from a college program he respected, have a letter from someone he trusted, have relatively good grades, and write a good, clear cover letter.

Once the field was narrowed and the interviews began, Jim was looking for someone personable, who understood what working in a small-town farming district was like, and who would always act respectably in the community. He asked candidates to describe themselves, their backgrounds, and what kind of experience their student teaching or first year of teaching had been. Candidates who could carry on a good conversation, who seemed at ease, and who could talk about helping children usually received job offers. Once hired, the new teachers would meet their colleagues at one back-to-school faculty meeting, receive the keys to their classrooms, and be on their own. If they needed help, they were expected to ask for it.

Throughout the years that he hired teachers, Jim seldom dealt with a teacher shortage or felt a need to actively recruit candidates. He never even thought about criminal background checks, teachers who had completed student teaching but couldn't pass a state competency test, nontraditional teachers who entered the classroom after age 35 or 40, or alternatively certified teachers. He probably would never have considered the possibility of hiring teachers from abroad; he rarely even hired from out of his state.

He wasn't aware of the phrase "behavior-based interviewing" or the steps for creating a teacher induction program with mentoring. He didn't have to create a "welcome wagon" to help young teachers find housing, insurance, and social activities. The new hires he found usually knew the area, had families there, and found the salaries and benefits of teaching quite attractive.

Jim's system for hiring new teachers actually worked well for him. The competent faculty that he hired generally had the admiration, thanks, and respect of the community. Across the country, most principals probably felt this way in the 1970s.

Fast Forward to Today: A Challenge for Schools and Districts

The Changing World of Teacher Hiring

"In Dekalb County School System in Georgia, the current teacher shortage has led to major changes in how we do business. The era of taking two months to hire a teacher is history. In today's business world, those who can move the data the fastest will be successful. Those who cannot move the data rapidly will be 'gone with the wind.' Teachers today must be hired within approximately two weeks, and teachers in critical fields must be hired within two days. If personnel administrators do not meet this 'fast track' hiring strategy, then someone else will hire the teacher before the slow movers have time to act....For those who haven't noticed, employment initiatives, practices, and clever approaches for hiring teachers are changing at a rapid pace."

Franklin Grant, *NEA Virtual Conference on Recruiting and Retaining Teachers* (2000).

Times have changed, and today hiring new teachers isn't typically the easiest activity for a principal. In fact, hiring new teachers has become a time-consuming job, with year-round responsibilities. While it still may be easy to find qualified second-grade teachers for schools in middle- or upper-class suburbs, the need for special education, math, science, bilingual, and foreign language teachers continues to grow, as does the need for qualified teachers in urban areas. Add to this situation the dwindling supply of new teachers, coupled with the need for more teachers to reduce class size and to fill the classrooms in high-growth population areas. For many schools and districts, the often-predicted teacher shortage is becoming very real.

The Recruitment and Retention Challenge

In speaking about the "teacher recruitment and retention challenge," Segun Eubanks of the National Education Association suggests that districts wanting to improve their practices in these areas ask themselves questions such as these:

Recruitment—

- How much does it cost to recruit a new teacher to your district?
- Does your district have clearly defined criteria for what a new teacher should know and be able to do? If so, how are these criteria implemented when recruiting new teachers and when providing induction to new teachers?

Retention—

- Why do teachers leave your district?
- What types of support and assistance do your new teachers want?
- How are new teachers assigned to schools and/or classrooms?
- How are new teachers evaluated?

Presentation to the Educational Leaders Consortium (2000)

Importance of the School District's Role

In the midst of this increasingly competitive environment, the school district can help or hinder a principal's efforts to hire well-qualified teachers. Mary Smith and Karen Knab have studied school district personnel systems, and they ask, "What would be the components of a system that would make teacher selection efficient, reliable, and valid?" Their research has found that the best hiring systems:

- identify those attitudes, behaviors, and skills that characterize the kind of teachers most wanted in classrooms;
- screen for these characteristics at every stage of data collection and candidate evaluation;
- validate the selection process to ensure that it indeed predicts excellence in classroom and professional performance;

- ensure that the hiring process complies with federal, state, and local laws;
- eliminate unproductive paperwork so the best candidates have confidence in the speed and skill of the system recruiting them;
- automate the process whenever possible to reduce staff time spent on clerical tasks;
- reserve labor-intensive personal evaluative techniques only for the most promising candidates;
- provide prompt, accessible, and accurate information to candidates at all stages of the hiring process; and
- give decision makers accurate and timely information about the overall process and its results.

Although principals participating in a 1997 study by Swinehart and Kay expressed satisfaction—in general—with their roles in the teacher hiring process and with the practices their districts employed, they also were clear about what needed to change:

- being on the receiving end of late budgeting decisions;
- being forced into last-minute planning for teacher selection;
- being given limited time to screen candidates;
- having a schedule that makes it impossible to observe candidates actually working with students;
- having virtually no training in how to select teachers;
- being unable to recruit candidates of color or candidates in particular subject areas; and
- having no systematic process of recruitment.

Jim O'Laughlin, Associate Superintendent for Personnel in the New Haven Unified School District in California, has created a checklist of elements of a successful school district program for recruiting and hiring new teachers. Take a look at the checklist on pages 8 and 9, and see how your district's practices stack up. Are there areas where you think it could improve to help you do a better job of hiring high-quality teachers? If so, use the checklist to generate discussion among principals, your superintendent, and other central-office staff. It's a good place to start.

DISTRICT CHECKLIST FOR RECRUITING, HIRING, AND RETAINING NEW TEACHERS

INCREASING QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF CANDIDATES	PROGRAM ELEMENT		
	EXISTS	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	DOES NOT EXIST
There is a local plan and allocation of resources to recruit the best and the brightest into the teaching profession.			
There is a local plan which focuses on recruiting a diverse population into the teaching profession.			
A pre-collegiate focus in middle schools and high schools results in programs in every school to recruit the best and brightest into teaching.			
Nontraditional candidates, such as paraprofessionals and individuals changing careers, are targeted for recruitment into teaching.			
Staff and community are solicited for assistance in identifying candidates for the teaching profession.			
Undergraduate programs at universities are utilized to recruit quality candidates for teacher preparation programs.			
The district sponsors teacher preparation programs in collaboration with local IHEs.			
The district supports regional, state, and national efforts to recruit teaching candidates (Urban Teacher Academy, CalTeach, Recruiting New Teachers, Inc.)			

CONTACTING THE CANDIDATES	PROGRAM ELEMENT		
	EXISTS	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	DOES NOT EXIST
Traditional sources such as placement offices and job fairs are fully utilized for recruiting.			
The district sponsors open house activities designed specifically for teaching candidates.			
The Internet is used to access databases of candidates from throughout the country.			
The Internet is used to communicate district vacancies to candidates throughout the country and world.			
The Internet is used to provide for efficient and timely communication with candidates.			

SELLING YOUR DISTRICT	PROGRAM ELEMENT		
	EXISTS	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	DOES NOT EXIST
The district has a public relations plan directly aimed at teaching candidates (print, video, Internet).			
The district has a home page that provides easy access to general information about the district.			
The district Web site provides specific information about every school and program in the district.			
The district Web site provides information about all vacancies and encourages open applications.			
The district Web site provides candidates with information about the employment process, benefits, salaries, support programs, and references for additional information.			

DISTRICT CHECKLIST FOR RECRUITING, HIRING, AND RETAINING NEW TEACHERS

FACILITATING THE APPLICATION PROCESS	PROGRAM ELEMENT		
	EXISTS	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	DOES NOT EXIST
An online application for employment encourages candidates to apply at all times over the Internet.			
E-mail is available so that candidates can easily communicate with the district, and every application is acknowledged by an e-mail message.			
Information is provided to candidates regarding whom to contact for answers to specific questions.			
SCREENING THE CANDIDATES	**PROGRAM ELEMENT**		
	EXISTS	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	DOES NOT EXIST
All candidate information is maintained in an Electronic Document Management System (EDMS), which makes the information available on the desktop of anyone needing the information in the district.			
An applicant tracking system is available to immediately identify candidates from the applicant pool who meet multiple criteria desired for vacancies.			
Custom reports on individuals in the total applicant pool or in subsets of the pool are immediately available.			
Screening interviews are provided for all candidates.			
Video interviewing is used for interactive interviewing of candidates from distant locations and to make employment decisions.			
THE EMPLOYMENT PROCESS	**PROGRAM ELEMENT**		
	EXISTS	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	DOES NOT EXIST
The employment process is provided to and clarified for all candidates.			
The employment process is clear and efficient.			
The employment process takes place in a timely manner once a vacancy has been determined.			
INDUCTION INTO THE DISTRICT AND PROFESSION	**PROGRAM ELEMENT**		
	EXISTS	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	DOES NOT EXIST
There is a structured orientation to the district and school.			
A variety of support providers are identified for every new teacher.			
An individual partner, available and accessible on a daily basis, is identified for each new teacher.			
An individualized induction plan is developed for each new teacher.			
There is flexible support available to meet the needs of individuals.			
A quality evaluation process exists independent from the induction process.			

From Jim McLaughlin, "Recruiting and Hiring High-Quality Teachers," *ERS Spectrum*, Fall 1999: 31-39. Used with permission in *How to Interview, Hire, and Retain High-Quality New Teachers* (2000), published by the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

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Notes, Reminders, and Ideas:

What Does Today's New Teacher Pool Look Like?

Just as there are big differences in the job of today's principal vs. a principal in the 1970s relative to finding and hiring new teachers, there have been even bigger changes in the pool of teacher candidates and the preservice training they receive. The more you know about these people and the educational experiences they have had, the better job you can do with reviewing their transcripts, developing interview questions, and providing on-target support for the new teachers you hire.

Today the typical new teacher candidate will probably not be a 22-year-old who just graduated from a university that he or she attended for four years. Teacher candidates who begin higher education in community colleges are beginning to account for more teacher education majors than ever before. Likewise, we find many candidates who get a liberal arts degree, then take a fifth-year program to learn how to be teachers. Still others return to college for teacher certification years after receiving their first degree. And most recently, alternative certification routes bring us subject-matter specialists who take education courses concurrently with their first years of teaching.

All these changes mean that some of the "old" ways of recruiting and hiring may need to be reconsidered. As the person key to hiring and retaining high-quality new teachers in your building, it's important for you to know as much as possible about the teacher pool—what motivates them and how they're being trained.

Who Becomes a Teacher Today?

Just about everyone has heard the old adage, "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach." For years, it was thought that the brightest college students did not enter teacher education, and that low salaries kept talented students out of teaching. However, new research finds that what new teachers have to say about their chosen profession—and what other young graduates have to say about the profession they did not choose—seems to fly in the face of some widely held assumptions. Today's new

What Do New Teachers Think about Teaching as a Career?

Teachers with five years or less experience were asked these two questions: How important is it to you that a job has each of the following characteristics? Does your current teaching position have this characteristic?

	% of New Teachers Responding	
	Absolutely Essential	Current Teaching Position Has It
Allows enough time to be with family	81	79
Contributes to society and helps others	72	97
Provides the supervision and support you need	64	78
Has job security	60	84
Gives the sense that you are respected and appreciated	59	66
Has good opportunities for advancement	33	59
Pays well	30	31

S. Farkas, J. Johnson, and T. Foleno, *A Sense of Calling: Who Teaches and Why* (2000), p. 11.

teachers are characterized as "highly motivated professionals who bring a strong sense of commitment and morale to their work." To our newest teachers, teaching "is a profession that requires a sense of mission," says this 2000 study by Farkas, Johnson, and Foleno. In other words, it still takes someone special to go into teaching.

Moreover, as teacher preparation programs have become increasingly more demanding, teaching is not a second major that a student can add at the last minute. And this increased rigor must be paying off, because school administrators indicate that the quality of the new teaching corps is indeed improving.

What About Teacher Education?

The knowledge base for teacher education has also increased dramatically in the last two decades. Teacher education programs are longer than they were in the 1970s and '80s. They are more thorough and have tougher entrance and exit requirements. Students often must complete courses in how to understand culturally diverse students and their backgrounds. Courses in English as a Second Language are recommended electives in many programs and requirements in others, and classroom

A Future New Hire Might Already Be Working in Your Building

With many school districts finding it increasingly difficult to find and hire all the high-quality teachers they need, some are turning to paraeducator-to-teacher programs. Through programs often developed in collaboration with area colleges and universities, experienced and effective support personnel who have been working in the classroom, library, or even on school buses or in the cafeteria are encouraged to enroll in a program that moves them toward teacher certification.

Although participants experience a "long haul to degree completion and licensure" since most are also working full-time, the dropout rate is low and evaluations of program completers are typically high. A majority of program participants come from "ethnic groups under-represented in the professions," another strong plus for schools and districts that are working toward a more diverse teaching force. Since they are already working in the schools, they have had experience with the school culture and with today's students—another potential benefit.

Barriers for participants include the cost of tuition and other course-related items, the time commitment, family responsibilities, and, for many of them, the length of time since they last were in school. Some districts with formal approaches designed to encourage and recruit support personnel for these programs provide financial and other supports for participants.

Anne Simmons, *A Guide to Developing Paraeducator-to-Teacher Programs* (2000).

management has been added to the list. These days, teacher education students must prove their technology skills and take classes that will prepare them to use technology in the classroom. All of these requirements are in addition to the foundation today's teacher candidates receive in general education (reading, writing, mathematics, social sciences, humanities) and in their chosen major field.

But the pre-service programs have not sacrificed practical experience for academic rigor. Most programs have become both more thorough *and* more practical. Teacher education majors in many programs spend hours and hours "out in the field"

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as observers and as participants in schools. In general, the number of hours of field experience required has gone up dramatically since the 1970s, and what the student does in the field has changed, too. Students do not just observe—they participate, write plans, and put them into action.

Finally, teacher certification has grown more rigorous. Many states require a "high-stakes" test, such as Praxis II, to be passed at the end of the teacher education program and before certification. It's called "high-stakes" because even a teacher education student who has passed every class with good grades and has successfully completed student teaching cannot receive teacher certification without a passing score for this one test.

The bottom line: All of these changes in who becomes a teacher and how they have been trained have complicated what used to be a straightforward task—finding and hiring the best candidates. Naturally, your community wants the very best, most caring, competent, and qualified teacher for every child. So do you; and just as if you ran a business, the key for you is making the right match between the needs of the job and the skills and experiences of the teacher candidates. Your school's parents and community look to you to determine which candidates are best for which classrooms.

It's up to you to "make the match." You can only do that if you have effective interviewing and hiring practices in place—and that requires both knowledge and careful planning. Let's look now at what you can do to build and maintain a successful system for hiring and keeping high-quality teachers.

Notes, Reminders, and Ideas:

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Organizing Your Search for New Teachers: Plan Ahead

We mentioned earlier that hiring new teachers has become a time-consuming job for many principals, one with year-round responsibilities. If you think of teacher hiring primarily as the time you spend interviewing candidates and making decisions about who will be offered a position, we should probably explain what we're talking about in more detail. So let's look first at the pieces that make up the puzzle of a comprehensive approach to attracting, selecting, and retaining high-quality new teachers—and where in the year they should be included on your to-do list. (The schedule described on the following page is summarized in the calendar on page 26.)

September-December

Finding, interviewing, and hiring staff is far too important to be a last-minute process. Early fall is the time to start with activities that can make the things you will need to do later on—actually interviewing and selecting candidates—both easier and more productive.

Early fall is the time to meet with the personnel director, superintendent, and possibly the board to secure their support for budget, personnel, and time. If you're new to the hiring process, or even just new to the district, fall is also the time to ask for information from your personnel office or superintendent about the district's hiring process.

The hiring process varies from district to district, and both increased implementation of site-based management and the teacher shortage have resulted in the shifting of some responsibilities from the central office to the school. Some principals report that, while in the past they did not talk to a teacher candidate until given the go-ahead by the central office, the emphasis is increasingly on making contact with any interested candidate in any way possible, and then directing the person toward the personnel office. The important thing is to be knowledgeable about the procedures used in your district.

As for the questions you might ask the central office staff, they could include:

- Will new teacher candidates be expected to process all their paperwork through the central office before ever meeting you, or will you sometimes be the first point of contact?
- Will you be expected to visit college campuses or go on recruiting trips?
- Does the district typically offer early contracts to outstanding candidates?

Answers to questions such as these will help you plan both your calendar and the support you will need through the remainder of the year.

Once you have a better idea of what will be expected of you, don't hesitate to request training about hiring practices, interviewing, etc., especially if you are a new principal. It will pay off in the long run. If workshops or more formal training through your district are not available, try resource books and videos. Or just talk with a more experienced principal for advice on how to organize your hiring process.

If any of your building staff will be involved in the screening, interviewing, and hiring process, remember to provide them with training, too. Although you may not have to do the training yourself, you are responsible for the overall process. So ask the

Use of Team Interviews in Selecting Staff

Allan Vann, an elementary school principal, describes a team interview approach in which two elementary school principals and two elementary school teachers interview candidates for elementary school positions. As an advantage, he feels that the "team interview brings different perspectives to bear. The participation of administrators and teachers from different schools adds a worthwhile dimension during the candidate questioning phase and during the discussions that follow." Disadvantages include the difficulty in scheduling time when all team members are available, the amount of time needed, and, in his view, the "nagging feeling that I didn't know these finalists as well as I used to know finalists during the prior interviewing process." Specifically, he felt that he could ask fewer questions and, again due to scheduling constraints, was able to observe only one rather than two demonstration lessons for each candidate.

ERS Spectrum (Spring 1994).

personnel director from your district or from a neighboring district for advice and guidance. Many states also have regional offices of education or educational service agencies that offer help and resources. Universities and even teachers' organizations also may have resources in the form of training or materials.

If you plan to conduct group interviews, a practice session is often helpful. This will provide the opportunity to decide who asks which questions, to discuss what you are looking for in the candidates' responses, and, in general, to make the actual interviews flow more smoothly.

Early fall is also not too soon to begin to project needs for new staff for next year. For example, you may already know that a teacher plans to retire, or that the district projects that more kindergartners are expected.

Evaluate last year's hiring process used in your school, and plan for changes that address problem areas. If you are a new principal, you might ask your office staff or teachers who were involved in the process for their ideas. Also, if you intend to involve teachers and other staff in the process, begin to plan how much of their time might be needed and when.

Try to visit area colleges. An effective way to interest soon-to-graduate education students in your school and district is to offer to make presentations about what these students should expect when looking for a position—both in your district and others. Their interest in hearing about the process is high, and your friendly face and willingness to help can go a long way toward making your district a place they seriously consider. (See page 18 for a sample letter.)

If you are considering recruiting student teachers for assignment to your school in January, let the schools of education in the area know your intentions early. Final decisions regarding the spring placement of student teachers are usually made in October. And colleges that have year-long student teaching usually make placements an entire year in advance.

Fall is also the time to work with campus career centers to schedule campus visits later in the spring for interviews or to assess student resumés and files for hot prospects. (See page 19 for a sample letter.)

Finally, as we'll discuss later, a high-quality induction program for new teachers will help to ensure that they make it successfully through their often-difficult first year—and that you won't need to look for replacements for them in May or June. This is another activity that should be ongoing during the fall.

Sample Letter Requesting Permission to Talk to School of Education Students

Note: This letter should be addressed to the head administrator of the college or university or department of education, or to a professor teaching a methods course. If you are uncertain of where to send it, send it to the head administrator. That person likely will get it into the right hands. You might consider telephoning or e-mailing as well. If you call, you could use the contents of this sample letter as a script.

Dear :

I am principal of *(school name)*, and I have found that it is beneficial for local school administrators to lay some groundwork before they begin the process of recruiting new teachers. One way to do this, which I believe is also a valuable one for prospective teachers too, would be for me to visit with students in the school of education/education department at *(name of college or university)*.

Specifically, I would like to take a portion of one class period to explain what the hiring process is like, what it is like to be a teacher in our school and district, and, more specifically, what a new teacher should expect during the first year. I would walk them through an average workday and explain some nuts-and-bolts aspects of the job while focusing on what it takes to be a successful teacher at our school. If possible, I would bring a teacher with me to elaborate and answer questions.

If you believe the education students from *(name of college or university)* would benefit from such an experience, I would like very much to talk with you by phone or in person to discuss such a visit. You can contact me directly at *(phone number, e-mail)*.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this request. I look forward to talking with you and visiting with your students.

Sincerely,

Sample Letter Requesting Permission to Recruit at School of Education

Note: This letter should be addressed to the university placement office, the office of student affairs, or the head administrator of the university or department of education. If you are uncertain of where to send it, send it to the head administrator. That person likely will get it into the right hands. You might consider telephoning or e-mailing as well. If you call, you could use the contents of this sample letter as a script.

Dear :

I am principal of *(school name)*, and I am beginning the process of recruiting new teachers. One step in this process that I believe will be a valuable one for both my school district and your students is to visit with students who will be completing your teacher preparation program in the next few months. During the visit, I would describe our school and district and provide additional information to any students who express interest in applying for a position. I would like very much to discuss such a visit with you either on the phone or in person.

Currently, we are in need of *(list position titles and any specific qualifications or requirements such as special certifications, dual certifications, particular areas of concentration, or the like)*. I have enclosed position descriptions to provide more complete information about the types of candidates we most need.

If, after reviewing these descriptions, you believe there are education students who will be graduating from *(name of college or university)* this year with whom I should talk, please let me know. You can contact me directly at *(phone number, e-mail)*.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this. I look forward to talking with you and visiting with your students.

Sincerely,

January and February

January and February are months when you should be able to make predictions of how many new hires will be needed and at what grade levels, in what specialty areas, etc. Spend some serious time in these months looking at and projecting student enrollment, faculty retirements, and position realignments. Be aware that a retirement may mean creating a different position, not just looking for someone who can do the "old" assignment that will be vacant.

As you begin to develop the list of positions to be filled, think about what you will be looking for in an ideal candidate. We'll talk later about developing quality interview questions, and that process begins with seriously considering what education, experiences, and qualities are most important to your school's program.

February is also a good month to intensify your early recruiting at nearby colleges. Consider volunteering to give a class session on the realities of working in a school. If this is possible, structure the class around your actual curriculum and what an assignment in your school might involve, using samples of textbooks, lesson plans, and student work. Get your teachers to help you design this class session.

Personal contacts are also important. Experienced principals who are particularly successful in finding and hiring new teachers say that they have found some of their people through neighbors, their churches, or similar contacts. Remember, your new teacher may already be a member of your community.

March and April

Depending on how your district organizes teacher recruitment efforts, you may need to attend job fairs in March and April. If you have an active personnel office, they probably want to have a presence at as many job fairs as possible, especially ones that have proven to be productive for the district. If attending job fairs is one of your responsibilities, take care to use the procedures established by your district, be sure to keep accurate records about the candidates with whom you talk, and bring back as many resumés on promising candidates as possible.

More and more job fairs are being held on inservice days or weekends when students are not in class. If this is the case for you, try to arrange to bring teachers with you to the job fair. They can be invaluable for helping screen candidates and for "telling it like it is" to prospective candidates.

Again, planning ahead can help you make more efficient use of your time. Use the list of things to take on page 21 after modifying it to fit your district's and your own personal approach to help you build and replenish a job fair kit to take with you.

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	Job Fair Checklist
	Overview description of the district and its instructional programs
	Videotape describing district
	Descriptions of specific instructional programs such as special education, ESL, etc.
	Material from my school
	My business card or phone number, address, etc.
	Material describing the community and highlighting special areas of interest
	District packet for applicants
	Summary of state requirements in regard to licensure, etc.
	Overview of district expectations for teacher qualifications
	Descriptions of available projected positions
	Reminder sheet: Conducting a Lawful Employment Interview
	Interview questions (my copy)
	Forms on which to write information about candidates interviewed
	Appointment schedule and/or sign-in sheet
	"Follow-up" sheets to be submitted to personnel office if additional contact is needed with the applicant
	List of district staff and telephone numbers, in case having candidate talk directly with another staff person is indicated
	Material describing school and district support for new teachers
	Material describing district's staff development program
	Material describing district's salary schedule and staff benefits
	Paper clips, stapler, tape, etc.

Sample Letter Inviting Candidate for Interview with Principal

Dear :

On behalf of the *(school district name)* and *(school name)*, I invite you to come for an interview for the position of *(position title)*. The interview will take place at the school, start at *(time)*, and last approximately *(amount of time estimated for interview)*.

You will meet with me. Please be ready to discuss your qualifications, background, education, and why you think you are suited for the position.

Also, I encourage you to bring along a portfolio with examples of your work. If you have one, we would also be happy to review a videotape of you teaching.

Please call *(name and telephone number of contact person such as school secretary)* to confirm this interview appointment and to get directions to the school.

I look forward to seeing you for this interview *(date)* at *(time of interview)*.

Sincerely,

When you are not recruiting for the district as a whole, begin to bring in candidates for interviews. (See the letters above and on page 23 as samples to use when inviting candidates to interview.) For many principals, the job fair is the first cut; then the best are invited to come for an on-site interview. In response to the teacher shortage, both schools and districts are increasingly likely to extend contracts early if a high-quality candidate is found. The feeling is—if you like them, get them "off the street" and committed before they move on to interview with someone else.

May-July

May, June, and July probably will be very busy months for you. You will be completing the hiring of new staff, trying to get each contract signed and approved by your board, mailing welcome letters to the new hires, and in some districts, contacting candidates that you didn't hire. If making these phone calls or writing these letters is one of your responsibilities, be prompt about making the notification and polite in

Sample Letter Inviting Candidate for Interview with Interview Team

Dear :

On behalf of the *(school district name)* and *(school name)*, I invite you to come for an interview for the position of *(position title)*. The interview will take place at the school, start at *(time)*, and last approximately *(amount of time estimated for interview)*.

You will meet with an interview team composed of *(titles of interview team members)*. Please be ready to discuss with us your qualifications, background, education, and why you think you are suited for the position.

Also, I encourage you to bring along a portfolio with examples of your work. If you have one, we would also be happy to review a videotape of you teaching.

Please call *(name of and telephone number contact person such as school secretary)* to confirm this interview appointment and to get directions to the school.

We look forward to seeing you for this interview *(date)* at *(time of interview)*.

Sincerely,

extending regrets—but don't go into details. The best approach is simply to state that the candidate hired provided the best match of qualifications with your school's needs.

Despite the potential for chaos in these months—months during which you will also be involved in other end-of-school activities—you need to remember that your outreach to new employees at this time may be crucial for them and for you. A letter welcoming them to the school and expressing your enthusiasm for working with them in the fall can help to assure them that they have made the right choice. (See page 24 for a sample letter.) Make everything you do for these new hires as positive as possible so they feel they will be coming to the most important job in the most supportive district and community in the state. For example, one district has worked with area real estate agents to develop a list of apartment complexes offering financial

Sample Letter of Welcome to New Teacher

Dear :

On behalf of the staff, students, and parents of *(school name)*, I'd like to welcome you to our school, district, and community. We are very pleased that you will be joining us as *(position title)*.

We feel fortunate that you have chosen to be a teacher at *(school name)*, and we see you as a vital part of our mission to *(add relevant portions of mission statement)*. We are excited that you will be joining our staff and look forward to seeing you *(date and time to report)* for *(nature of function on first report date, for example: orientation, inservice, new staff introductions, etc.)*.

I have included a packet of information about our students, school, and district to help you become more familiar with us. In it is a school calendar for this coming year. I have highlighted key activities with which you will be involved during your first month.

Please be aware *(include any specific, important information or start-of-the-year responsibilities that the new hire needs to know about before reporting for his or her assignment)*.

In addition, we soon will be sending you information about our community. I hope it will be useful to you as you settle in.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to contact *(relevant staff person and contact information)* or me *(contact information)*. And again, welcome aboard, and we will see you *(date and time to report)*.

Sincerely,

incentives for new teachers. This kind of initial support will make new teachers feel greater loyalty to the district.

August

In August most schools are either back in session, or at least having their orientation sessions and getting ready to bring students back to the classroom. But some principals still need to fill any remaining openings brought on by late resignations or other unforeseen circumstances. If you're in this boat, make sure that any late hires get "caught up" with the materials and information that you shared with other new employees over the summer.

Also, although your district's personnel office may be responsible for explaining the nuts-and-bolts aspects of the job such as insurance and benefit packages to new employees, be sure to check that your new teachers have had all their questions answered. Support for your new teachers in the way of induction, mentors, etc., will also be part of your schedule for this and the following months. An effective support program will go a long way to retaining these teachers—and reducing your need to hire at the end of the year. (See pages 55-61.)

Finally, remember that the day after the first day of school is the time to start your plans for hiring next year's crop of teachers.

Notes, Reminders, and Ideas:

CALENDAR OF RECRUITMENT, HIRING, AND INDUCTION ACTIVITIES

Months	Activities	Additions and Notes
September-December	■ Meet with the district personnel director to discuss the hiring process. Request training if necessary. ■ Review last year's process, and make adjustments and improvements. ■ Begin to project staff needs for next year. ■ Inform/train staff who will be involved in the hiring process. ■ Make contact with area teacher training institutions and volunteer to visit classes of soon-to-graduate students. ■ If you are interested in having student teachers placed in the school, make contact with area colleges to make arrangements. ■ Schedule spring visits for recruiting and interviewing with campus career centers. ■ Provide induction and support for new teachers.	
January-February	■ Continue to project and analyze staff needs for next year. ■ Begin to develop profiles of your "ideal" candidates for specific positions. ■ Continue recruiting at area colleges. ■ Make personal contacts with soon-to-graduate teachers or their parents who live in your community.	
March-April	■ Attend job fairs and college and university recruitment activities. ■ Begin to review paperwork of candidates and schedule interviews. ■ Work with your district to extend early offers if you find high-quality candidates.	
May-July	■ Complete interviewing and hiring. ■ Contact candidates who are not offered positions. ■ Send welcome letters with information about your school, district, and community to new hires.	
August	■ Complete hiring for last-minute openings. ■ Check to see that all your new hires have had their questions answered about district personnel policies, benefits, etc. ■ Begin induction for new teachers.	

Before You Interview

One of the first questions new principals ask about the hiring process is, "How can I make it both productive and easy on myself?" We are here to say that the hiring process never will be "easy"—and the more conscientious you are, the less "easy" it will be. On the other hand, there *are* things you can do to keep it from being a burdensome chore.

We've already stressed that organizing your hiring process over the course of a year will make it seem less difficult. In addition, there is much you can do right before you interview candidates to make the process flow more smoothly, too. Start by organizing your review of candidates' paperwork.

Structured Screening Interviews to Streamline Paperwork

Many districts are now using a very structured process to screen, or even interview, candidates. Principals are trained in using a specific set of questions, and to look for particular components in the answers. Scores are assigned to each response, with these then summed to generate an overall score. If your district is using a similar approach, the screening you need to do of a candidate's paperwork in order to make decisions about who to interview may be streamlined, since the personnel office will provide you with both the candidate's file and a score for the screening interview.

Sort Paperwork and Make "First-Cut" Decisions

The very best way to sort paperwork is to decide what you are looking for well in advance. Don't waste time leafing through 30 or 40 sets of credentials without

fairly specific criteria for the evaluation and selection of the ones you'll interview. Easily said—but where do you start?

Identify Needed Job Skills

It is often helpful to have a team work with you to identify, process, and eventually hire the best candidates. So if you have staff working with you, get them involved right away by talking about what you expect the new people to do.

We will talk in more detail in the next chapter on interviewing about how to "spec the job" and decide what mix of skills, experiences, and education would make an ideal candidate. However, the time to start with this is now. Think not only about the grade level for which you may need a new teacher, but also, for example, about whether experience with instructional use of technology might be helpful. Or whether your school could use someone whose skills in teaching math are particularly strong.

After these discussions, work with staff to create a "generic" rating document for evaluating paperwork, as well as one that also includes notes about the specific position and skills in which you are interested. A generic form appears on page 29, and a document that has been filled in with specific criteria is shown on page 30.

To make any form such as this really helpful, you should also determine what would constitute "good grades" (a "4" in our example) category by category.

Some hints are:

- Look at the candidates' cover letters and resumés for more than background information. Look also for quality of written expression. The cover letter should show that the candidate read the advertised description and is truly interested in the specific job. It should include at least one or two relevant or interesting facts that make the candidate stand out.

- Transcripts tell a story, and they can provide "red flags." For example, a candidate might have received several grades of "incomplete," have finished courses late, or have one exceptionally weak area. Grades reflect attendance and commitment, as well as effort. Look carefully at candidates' individual grades, not just their GPA's. Also remember that some of your candidates may be entering teaching through less-traditional routes. For example, you might give less weight to an undergraduate transcript of a second-career candidate. In that case, job experience (including references' comments about attributes such as work ethic and punctuality) and grades received in courses taken more recently would be especially important.

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Rating Document for Evaluating Applicant Paperwork, Generic

- **Position:**
- **Skills:**
- **Experiences needed:**
- **Other:**

	Score (high of 4)
Cover letter	
Indicates candidate understands the position	_____
Has two relevant facts about self	_____
High readability (grammar, punctuation, spelling, signature)	_____
Resumé	
High readability (grammar, punctuation, spelling)	_____
Experience in teaching or student teaching is appropriate	_____
Educational background is appropriate	_____
Transcripts	
Grades are consistently high	_____
Course work has been taken in:	
• _____	_____
• _____	_____
• _____	_____
Letters of recommendation strongly recommend the candidate.	
Letter #1	_____
Letter #2	_____
Letter #3	_____
Specific behaviors and experiences	
Certification an exact match	_____
Past teaching experience a match:	
• _____	_____
• _____	_____
• _____	_____

Notes: _____

Rating Document for Evaluating Applicant Paperwork, with Criteria

- **Position:** Second-grade teacher

- **Skills:** Certified in early childhood with strong preparation in reading required; course work in special education and/or ESL desirable.

- **Experience needed:** Teaching or student teaching in first, second, or third grade preferably in a setting that supported inclusion of most special education students and teaming of regular and special education teachers.

- **Other:** Would be helpful if candidate had experience with non-English-speaking students.

	Score (high of 4)
Cover letter	
Indicates candidate understands the position	_____
Has two relevant facts about self	_____
High readability (grammar, punctuation, spelling, signature)	_____
Resumé	
High readability (grammar, punctuation, spelling)	_____
Experience in teaching or student teaching is appropriate	_____
Educational background is appropriate	_____
Transcripts	
Grades are consistently high	_____
Course work has been taken in:	
• Early childhood	_____
• Teaching reading	_____
• Working with non-English-speaking students	_____
Letters of recommendation strongly recommend the candidate.	
Letter #1	_____
Letter #2	_____
Letter #3	_____
Specific behaviors and experiences	
Certification an exact match	_____
Past teaching experience a match:	
• Early childhood	_____
• Inclusive approach to special education	_____
• Experience with a student population similar to ours	_____

Notes: _____

To make the evaluation sheet complete, you need to add the five or six behaviors and experiences specific to the position. Write a list of the job skills keyed to what's really needed for teaching in *your* school in *this* position.

As you review the applicants' paperwork, you can give "extra points" for each of these more specific criteria. For instance, a candidate who indicates that he or she had a successful student teaching experience in a district with characteristics similar to yours might receive extra points, as might a candidate whose transcript shows a semester-long course in classroom management, or a candidate with an English as a Second Language endorsement. Once you've reviewed the candidates' credentials, add up all the numbers—including the extra points—and whoever gets your highest rating gets an interview.

Checklists become even more important if you are not alone in choosing finalists to interview, since using a consistent set of standards ensures that all candidates receive equal consideration. They are also an efficient way to provide common points of reference for interview team members to use when evaluating candidates.

As you soon will see, our main theme is that behavior-based interviewing and hiring are good strategies for identifying and hiring quality staff. These strategies are built on the idea of evaluating past behaviors to predict future ones, and we think paperwork can also be evaluated from this behavior-based perspective. A candidate's paperwork is a good insight into what his or her paperwork will be like after being hired, and you need to look at it that way. As you review the candidates' paperwork, ask yourself:

- Has the candidate either provided all required forms, transcripts, etc., or indicated when the file will be complete?
- Is the cover letter clear and highly readable?
- If the candidate was responding to a description of a specific opening, is there information in the letter that addresses the position and how his/her experience and training fit with it?
- Are there misspelled words or grammatical mistakes?
- If the candidate has been asked to complete a form, are all the items answered, and has the requested information been provided?
- Is the candidate's signature legible?

Little things can tell you a lot. If there are problems in this very important paperwork, which should have been prepared with special care, those problems or similar ones may continue.

A special note is in order here about reviewing candidates' certification status. The urgent need for teachers, high-stakes exams that provide an additional hurdle for some teachers who have completed all the requirements but these, and the trend for some candidates to enter teaching through less-traditional routes have all made screening decisions concerning certification more problematic.

While we encourage you always to hire certified personnel, we realize that some schools will have difficulty finding and hiring certified staff for all their positions. If this is the case in your district, remember that whether a candidate is certified or not, the other criteria on which the decision to interview (and eventually hire) are based should be the same. For non-certified candidates, however, you also need to know and feel good about how they plan to work toward certification. Be sure to develop a question about this as part of your interview for people who lack certification.

Conduct Telephone Interviews and Pre-interviews

Using Pre-Interviews

Paul Ash describes the 10-minute pre-interviews typically conducted in his school district as both brief and businesslike. The primary purpose is to screen out those unqualified for the job and the focus is on

> questions that reveal qualities we expect to find in effective teachers. Among these qualities: a sense of mission and enthusiasm, communication skills, knowledge of ways to vary instruction, the ability to articulate knowledge of a curriculum area, the ability to serve as a good role model for children, and an enjoyment of teaching students.

The Executive Educator (March 1992).

As time-saving as a system for reviewing paperwork can be, you can save yourself even more time (and stress) by adding a pre-interview to your hiring process. If your district does not include pre-interviews as a standard part of its recruitment process, your best bet for a pre-interview is to attend recruitment fairs. You'll not only be able to do preliminary interviewing face-to-face, you'll get a good sense of the candidate pool. If you cannot interview candidates at recruitment fairs (or if you only

want to interview a handful of the best candidates), take advantage of a telephone screening interview to help you decide which candidates to invite in for an on-site interview.

To make the process easier for you and to make it fair to all candidates, ask each candidate the same questions at the recruitment fair or in a telephone interview. Formulate a list in advance and use ones that let you evaluate candidates quantitatively, if possible. Also, take care to provide the same information about the position and the interview process to each candidate so that they all enter the on-site interview on an equal footing.

In the next section we'll examine behavior-based interviewing and see some sample questions you might consider.

Notes, Reminders, and Ideas:

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Behavior-Based Interviewing

Just as mentoring in the business world was adapted to be used in educational settings, this business tool, behavior-based interviewing (BBI), also has solid application in education. The premise of behavior-based interviewing is that a candidate's past behavior is the best predictor of his or her future performance, and the value of BBI is to predict how candidates might perform as employees by asking them to describe how they have acted in past situations. Since care is taken by the interviewer to develop questions related to job expectations of the current position, the past behaviors provide a more solid indicator of what can be expected of the candidate in the new setting than questions such as "tell me about yourself."

As for effectiveness as a hiring tool, P. C. Green says the behavior-based interview is "the most objective, systematic, consistent, and unbiased method available for filling jobs with the best people" (1996, 49).

Good Interviews Begin with Good Questions

Jerry Kashwer highlights the importance of developing good interview questions. In his view, "'Yes' and 'No' answers may be fine on the witness stand, but they can be virtually worthless to administrators trying to find out what makes job applicants tick." A good question, for example, might be, "Why did you decide to handle the situation that way?" He suggests that the answer might, in addition to providing more detail about goals and the end results, provide some insight into the applicant's decision-making process.

Oklahoma School Board Journal (June 2000), p. 11.

Specifically, a principal using BBI will ask candidates to describe former classroom problems or situations, the actions taken to resolve the problems, and the results. Candidates are expected to communicate specifics, tell succinct stories, and let the interviewer know what they learned from their past experiences. The goal for the principal is to find out about a candidate's past experiences, actions, and reactions to situations in the classroom as a way to determine how that candidate will perform in the new classroom. Thus, BBI is related to the simulation interview and the situational interview. In practice, BBI principals ask questions that are open-ended about past events, using phrases such as "Describe a time when...." "Describe a problem that you solved," or "Describe a situation where...."

In behavior-based interviewing, it is important that everyone who is involved in the interview process uses the same questions and that, if more than one candidate is interviewed, each is asked the same questions. The first challenge for school administrators, of course, is to develop just the right questions for each teacher position vacancy, then to evaluate the candidates' answers, preferably in a quantifiable manner. The good news is you may already be using a type of BBI; for example, if you ask candidates hypothetical questions, such as "What do you do if a student consistently fails to pay attention in your class?" A more formal understanding of BBI, however, can help you make questions like this the norm in your interviews and provide you with a better insight into what the candidate has done and, more important, might be expected to do.

Beginning the Behavior-Based Interviewing Process: Spec the Job

Before you get to the question-writing step in BBI, there is a preliminary first step—identifying the job skills as explicitly as possible. It is critical that the interviewer understands the job thoroughly, and is able to identify both technical and performance skills needed to be successful. Because of the very complicated nature of teaching, it can be harder to describe all of the skills needed to teach than it is for other fields. Despite this, research and practice show that skills associated with good teaching *can* be identified and described.

For instance, in hiring a good teacher, you know you are looking for someone who knows the subject matter, how to teach it, how to organize and manage a classroom, and how to motivate and engage students.

You also know you're looking for a person who can communicate with parents, other teachers, and administrators, both in person and in writing. He or she needs to be organized and have what Arends calls "with-it-ness," the ability to keep on top of an array of fast-moving, complex classroom activities and interactions. You hope to find a candidate who exhibits enthusiasm, energy, initiative, and the capacity for reflection and lifelong learning. Your list could grow longer and longer; but the key is

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Going Beyond the Transcript

Researchers at the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning conducted a five-year longitudinal study of beginning and experienced teachers. Their findings debunk some common myths about learning to teach and emphasize the importance of going beyond a review of a candidate's transcript to asking "good questions" that provide additional insight into his or her teaching skills. One of these "myths" and the findings are presented below:

MYTH: Majoring in an academic subject will provide the knowledge needed to teach the subject.

FINDING: NCRTL researchers asked teacher candidates to apply their subject-matter understanding as a teacher would. For example, rather than being asked how to solve a particular math problem, teachers were asked how they would explain a concept to a student or to develop a story problem or example to illustrate a particular concept. The surprising finding was that teachers who majored in the subject they were teaching often were no more able than non-majors to perform these important teaching tasks. Majoring in an academic subject in college did not guarantee that teachers had the specific kind of subject-matter knowledge needed for teaching.

Findings on Learning to Teach (1993), pp. 1-2.

for you to decide what you *really* need in a candidate for each position opening, and then to write your BBI questions accordingly.

Here's one other tip: once you've written down what you're looking for, ask some current teachers to review the specs. They should be able to help you fine-tune them, and can also add some close-to-the-ground reality.

Behavior-Based Interview Questions

Washington writes that behavior-based interview questions vary in their actual wording, but that "in essence they will begin with, 'Tell me about a time when....'" He goes on to provide some sample interview questions from the business world:

Tell me about a time when you:

- achieved a great deal in a short amount of time.

- worked effectively under a great deal of pressure.
- were especially creative in solving a problem.
- really had to remain flexible.
- used facts and reason to persuade someone to accept your recommendation.
- built rapport quickly with someone under negative conditions.
- wrote a report that was well received by others.
- had to make a decision you knew would be unpopular.
- were in a situation when events and circumstances changed rapidly.

Or:

Tell me about a time when you:

- were disappointed in your performance.
- were unwilling or unable to make the necessary sacrifice to achieve a goal.
- didn't handle a stressful situation very well.
- were unable to complete a project on schedule despite your best efforts.

As you can see by some of the questions above, the questions are not all designed to elicit information about past successes. By asking about problems—and how the candidate dealt with these—you are providing a way to look for other desirable attributes such as the ability to learn from mistakes.

While BBI questions, for the school setting, might be developed primarily to assess knowledge and skills such as classroom management, they can also be used to assess characteristics such as adaptability, communication, decisiveness, delegation, empathy, interpersonal relations, organization, risk-taking, and teamwork (Pascarella 1996).

Having some specific "answers" in mind that say "this is a top-notch candidate," perhaps discussing them with staff members who are helping you review your job specs or who will be involved in the interview process, will often help you to fine-tune the questions and make "rating" the answers more objective. George Pawlas (1995) offers a useful approach—STAR (situation, task, action, and result)—for evaluating answers, with applicants expected to describe a situation, the action that was taken, and the result. Think about your questions from this perspective—are they structured so that candidates can really describe behaviors that provide you insight into how they teach?

Finally, remember that the interview provides you with other valuable information. For instance, is the candidate able to express himself or herself well? Does caring for children come through in the answers? Do you get the sense that there would be an

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interest in continuing to learn through participating in staff development? Can you see the candidate as a collaborative member of the school team?

Critical Areas of Knowledge and Skills

The American Association of School Personnel Administrators' publication *Teachers of the Future: A Continuous Cycle of Improvement* (1997) includes an extensive list of critical knowledge areas and skills for teachers. In addition to these, the guide includes "evidences" of each of these skills plus related selection techniques and sample oral or written interview questions.

For example, one "evidence" of "Know how to teach the subject(s) to students" is "using differentiated learning activities to meet the needs of all students." To assess this area, the interviewer might ask: "How have you accommodated different learning styles in your classroom?" Elements to look for in the answer include use of appropriate teaching strategies, modification of lesson plans as needed, and low-risk opportunities for student participation.

Ice-Breaker and "Getting to Know You" Questions

To begin the BBI process, introduce yourself and clarify with the candidate the nature of the job and the specifics of that position. Explain briefly what kind of interview this is—that you are seeking information about past experiences as a way of gauging the candidate's ability to do a successful job in the new position. Let the candidate know that you are taking notes and evaluating responses, or if you plan to videotape the interview.

Then ask an "icebreaker" type question so that the candidate can give a brief summary of their teaching experience. Examples include:

- When did you decide to become a teacher?
- Tell me one thing about your teaching or decision to become a teacher that is not on your resumé.

Questions about What and How to Teach: Curriculum and Instruction

Whether you are hiring a kindergarten teacher or a fourth-grade teacher who will specialize in science, all teachers need to know how to teach. So you'll want to

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Elements of the Interview

(See the form provided on pages 51-53 for you to use in developing your own interview.)

- Introductions and ice-breaker questions
- Questions about:
  - Curriculum and instruction
  - Planning
  - Classroom organization and management
  - Homework and grading
  - Meeting individual student needs
  - Communication with parents, colleagues, and administrators
  - Professional growth
- Open-ended questions to allow the candidate time to share strengths and experiences
- Selling your school and district
- Concluding the interview
- Post-interview reflection by interviewers

begin with questions about curriculum and instructional approaches. Below we provide some as a starting point. Some of the questions are more specific than others. Use the specs you have developed to make the questions match the job.

Sample questions about curriculum and instruction:

- What were some of the basic skills in mathematics that students learned in your classroom?
- Describe a social studies unit you have taught.
- Describe your classroom.
- Describe how you would start a typical science lesson.
- What are your experiences with math manipulatives?
- Describe how you have included both skills-based and whole language instruction in your reading lessons.

- Describe experiences you have had team teaching or working with a grade level team.

Questions like these give you more specific information about what the candidate is prepared to teach rather than just asking, "Tell me about your experiences teaching first grade." Candidates should have fairly lengthy and organized answers to most of these questions. Even ones without much experience should have had at least one college class dealing with these issues. Beware the candidate who can't be specific or who says only things like, "I want to be creative and original and let the students study the kinds of things that I studied in this grade. I don't want it all to be spoon-fed to them."

Questions about How to Teach: Lesson and Long-Range Planning

Once the candidate has successfully managed to tell you about *what* should be taught, ask about *how* they plan to teach the material; and no better way exists to see their organizational style than to ask about planning. Below are sample BBI questions about planning.

Sample questions about lesson planning and longer-range planning:

- Tell me about your approach to planning units for your class.
- How did you divide large amounts of material to be covered?
- How did you decide how much is appropriate for a class? A week?
- Tell me about a specific topic you taught last year. How did you organize this topic?
- Tell me about your lesson planning style. How do you write a lesson plan, and what does it include?

Good answers should cover the candidate's past experiences with setting goals and objectives for units, and include examples of how he or she planned the time needed to cover the topics, as well as how the activities for students were put together.

Candidates should also mention how they have gathered and used supplemental materials and how they assessed and evaluated what students learned about the material covered in the unit.

Be wary of a candidate who looks lost or becomes vague when asked a question about long-range planning or unit planning. Likewise, candidates who say that they "just used the curriculum guide and the textbook" are telling you a lot about both their past and future performance.

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Lesson planning is so important to good teaching that it definitely merits fairly detailed questions and answers. The top candidates will be able to describe those aspects of their plans that dealt with something to settle the class and get them focused, on the one or two objectives that guide instruction, and on their approach to instructional delivery. Finally, a good answer includes information about how the candidate assessed or evaluated what the students learned.

Classroom Organization and Management

The better the candidate is at organizing and managing the classroom, the easier both of your jobs will be when the candidate is hired. Principals typically say the management and discipline issues remain the toughest ones for all new teachers, even some with considerable experience—and many teachers agree. The challenges of organizing their classrooms for productive teaching and learning are just as important to most teachers as their management and discipline challenges. Below are some sample organization and management questions.

Sample questions about classroom organization and management:

- Tell me about classroom management plans that you have used.
- Tell me how you establish rules of behavior in your classroom at the beginning of the year.
- What rewards and consequences worked well for the students you taught? Why?
- Tell me about a time when your classroom management plan worked well for you.
- Tell me about a time when your management plan did not work and students misbehaved or were not motivated.
- Tell me about how you reacted when a child used profanity.

Good candidates will be able to articulate which classroom structures, organizational schemes, rewards, and consequences worked well for their students. A candidate who can clearly describe a workable classroom management plan, then explain how he or she would communicate rules and consequences, is better prepared to start the classroom on the first day of school. Likewise, a strong candidate will tell about an experience in managing a classroom, and how he or she learned from that experience. Even telling you what they won't do gives you some good evidence to evaluate. Watch out for the candidate who says, "I always like to just start out being friendly and see how the class reacts." This game plan often just sets everyone up for a disaster.

Naturally, a new graduate you interview will not have a lot of experience, but such a candidate should still be able to describe what he or she learned about

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management in their field experiences and during student teaching. Alternative certification students who have had little or no field experiences will simply not have the background to share real-life classroom management stories. However, they may have life experiences that could be transferable. See what they say.

Homework and Grading

Homework often brings as many groans from teachers as it does from their students. And unfortunately, there are teachers who have given up assigning homework, because so few of their students actually do it. If however, homework is assigned as a matter of policy or practice in your school or district, you need to know your candidates' position on it. Similarly, you must know the candidates' positions on grading and how they would approach assessing and grading students. Below are some sample homework and grading questions.

Sample questions about homework and grading:

- What amounts and types of homework did you assign in the grade you taught last year?
- What have you done in the past if students did not do the assigned homework?
- Explain your grading system to me, assuming I am a student.
- How did you communicate your grading system to parents?

Grading goes hand in hand with homework, so ask candidates to explain their typical grading system to you. Their answers should demonstrate they have a fair system, and one that is easily understood. If the candidate's answer is unclear to you, another professional educator, how will it sound to the student or the parents? A clear answer to this question is also an important indicator that the candidate really understands his or her own system.

Meeting Individual Needs and Cultural Awareness

In today's world, you will need to ask questions that will tell you if the candidate has been ready and able to successfully teach students with a wide range of ability levels, experiences, and cultural backgrounds. This requires training, skills, and a willingness to work with more than just the "average" child. Your best approach, again, is asking behavior-based questions. Below are some sample questions.

Sample questions about meeting individual needs:

- Tell me about a classroom in which you have worked with students from diverse backgrounds.

- Tell me about a time when you worked with students who were not native speakers of English.
- Tell me about your work with special needs students.
- Describe the problems and stressors of students with whom you have worked. What can (or should) you do about these problems as a teacher?
- Tell me about experiences you have had where tolerance and cultural diversity were promoted in the classroom.
- What are some of the instructional approaches you have used to help *all* children in your classroom succeed?

As with the other answers, you are looking for specifics. For example, in response to the last question, a candidate who can tell you how she or he has used both individual and group work to meet the needs of individual learners will typically have more strategies and so be able to successfully teach a broad range of learners. Have the candidate go beyond philosophies. Ask about problems that they have encountered and overcome.

Communication with Parents, Colleagues, and Administrators

During any interview you should be constantly assessing the candidate's ability to communicate. It has been said that teaching is communicating and communicating is teaching, so it is vital that candidates have this skill. Be alert, as you conduct the interview, to the candidate's ability to explain things clearly, concisely, and in plain English. If answers are confusing to you, they may be even more confusing to parents.

Colleagues are another important group with whom teachers need to communicate. Teaching is no longer a solitary endeavor, so the candidate needs to be able to show you how he or she can be an effective team player and a cooperative faculty member. As a final tip, it might be worthwhile to ask candidates about their expectations of their building administrator. And you might want to find out how they would approach their principal with a request or a complaint.

Here are some questions to help you find out more about how candidates handle these kinds of communications.

Sample questions about communicating with parents and colleagues:

- When and how have you communicated with parents? What strategies were successful? Which didn't work as well?
- Describe how you have (or would) conduct a parent conference.

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- Have you worked with parent volunteers in your classroom? Tell me about it.
- Share an example of a communication with a parent that enabled you to better help a child in your class.
- Tell me about a communication or meeting with a parent that did not go as you expected.
- Tell me about a situation where you approached your principal with a request.
- Tell me about a time when you co-taught, planned, or collaborated with another teacher.

Again, ask candidates to describe past experiences specifically—for example, the reason for a conference they have conducted, the objectives of the conference, and the outcomes. For candidates fresh out of school, ask what and how they *would* communicate in various conference scenarios.

Professional Growth

Even though the phrase "lifelong learner" has gotten to be an educational cliché, you certainly want to hire a candidate who knows that he or she is not a finished product. You want to find out how eager and willing he or she is to keep learning and growing in the profession. Below are sample questions to help you.

Sample questions about professional growth:

- What do you read to keep current in your field?
- What conferences or workshops have you attended outside of school?
- What aspect of your teacher education program do you feel best prepared you for teaching?
- If you have a stressful day, what might you do to combat your "teacher stress?"

If the candidate has not yet talked about his or her teacher education program, ask a question about the "most valuable part" of that program. Lastly, you should ask about the candidate's recertification plans or about their plans to continue their education for advanced or specialized degrees.

A Note about Portfolios— The Candidate's (and Interviewer's) Best Friend

Before moving on to the end-of-interview questions, we want to say a few words about the value of portfolios and suggest you ask candidates to bring portfolios

Making Portfolios Part of the Selection Process

Jerry Hall, a Texas superintendent, has seen the applicant screening process shift over time to include additional steps. The traditional screening process typically consisted only of a review of applications, resumés, and certification information; a reference and background check; and an interview by a supervisor and/or the personnel department. In recent years, candidates might be asked to interview with a panel of teachers and are also being asked to demonstrate job-related competency through more than transcripts and recommendations. Well-developed portfolios help teacher candidates to document important competencies.

Presentation to the Commissioner's Midwinter Conference on Education (1995)

to their interview. As noted earlier, it is important for anyone wanting to be a teacher to exhibit knowledge of appropriate curricular topics, long-range unit planning, and daily lesson planning, as well as being well-versed in the areas outlined above. Think how much more impressive a candidate would be if he or she could pull out a portfolio and show actual examples.

A portfolio speaks volumes that can't help but benefit both the candidate and the interviewer. It's a good reality check for you. And it's good sales material for the candidate; rather than just talking about planning, she or he can open the portfolio and show you an example of an outline used to plan and teach an actual class. Moreover, because today's students need teachers who know the value of visual aids, a candidate who can clearly explain while showing you something from a portfolio will be a valuable asset.

Providing Open-ended Opportunities for Candidates to Share Strengths and Experiences

Some candidates may have significant information they want to share that has not been covered by your questions. Many are looking also for one last chance to really "sell" themselves. Below are some sample questions that will help you get at this information before you close the interview.

Sample questions to ask at the conclusion of the interview:

- Is there something else about your teaching experiences that you would like to talk about? or, Is there something that you prepared for this interview that you have not yet had a chance to share?

- Now that we have talked, why do you want this job, at this school, with this grade level?

Pay close attention to the answers to these more open-ended questions; they can get to the heart of the candidate's commitment and enthusiasm.

Selling Your School and District

Embedded in this whole interview process—and more important in this time of teacher shortage than ever before—should be your efforts to sell your school and district to the candidates. After you have finished asking questions, encourage the candidate to ask you questions—and be prepared to highlight programs and practices that make what you have to offer stand out.

The Interview as a Marketing Tool

Remember, an interview is a two-way street. You want to find the best teacher, and your candidate wants to work for the best school district. It might sound obvious, but many interviewers forget the importance of making eye contact, smiling, and reacting positively to the candidate. If the interview is a positive experience, the successful candidate is more likely to accept a contract.

Gary Norris and Robert Richburg, *The American School Board Journal* (November 1997).

For example, one district feels sure that its extensive listing of professional development provided for teachers has sold it to new teacher candidates. Another district points to the extensive and positive support provided by parents as something that helps it sell its schools. Another talks about its efforts to study and then implement a research-based approach to teaching pre-reading skills in kindergarten, one that has been significantly more successful than prior approaches. Find your own examples and be sure to build a place in the interview to talk about them.

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Concluding the Interview

Finally, you should ask the candidate if he or she has any questions for you. Then let the candidate know your time frame for decision making, mention whether a second interview is planned, and discuss salary and benefits if this is your district's practice.

Some Cautionary Notes

This chapter on interviewing would not be complete without some cautionary notes. For both legal reasons and to ensure that you ask the same or similar questions of each candidate, use a uniform list of questions for every interview. Always tell the candidates that you will be taking notes from their responses, and that you'll be using these notes later to refresh your memory when you are comparing candidates.

Some interviewers take descriptive notes and also make a quantitative judgement (such as assigning a numerical ranking for each question asked). Both notes and a numerical rating system can be very helpful, but you have to choose what's best for you. Above all, your rating system should be easy to use and should help you evaluate answers and candidates fairly and with uniformity.

In addition, federal law forbids asking questions that could be interpreted as discriminating against any person because of sex, age, race, national origin, or religion. If you're new to interviewing, it would be wise to get a more complete explanation of illegal questions. (See the box on page 48.) There are many popular books about the legal aspects of interviewing that you could review. Or you could ask your district personnel director for guidelines.

It is sometimes difficult to draw the line between a question that might be just "small talk" and an illegal question. For example, "My, what a pretty ring that is. Is it a family heirloom?" can be perceived as an illegal question if it is seen as an attempt to determine marital status. Likewise, if the position requires attendance at sports events on a Saturday or Sunday, asking "Does your religion allow you to work on the weekends?" is illegal. An alternative, legal question would be, "Is working at a weekend game a problem for you?" As a rule of thumb, it is best to stick to questions about experience, skills, and training. Be cordial, but businesslike, and avoid chitchat.

It is also very important that you make sure others who help with the interviewing process know about and avoid illegal questions or situations that might be perceived as trying to find out confidential information. For example, explain to other staff members, including both people who will be helping you interview and secretaries who may be greeting the candidates, that asking questions about children, spouse, hometown, etc. is illegal, even if it's innocent small talk. (See the sample letter to staff on page 50.)

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Take Care Not to Ask Illegal Questions

The following examples from an information sheet distributed by the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing demonstrate appropriate and inappropriate questions for your candidates. In addition, "any inquiry, even though neutral on its face, which has an adverse impact upon persons on a basis enumerated in the Fair Employment and Housing Act (race, sex, national origin, etc.), is permissible only if it is sufficiently related to an essential job function to warrant its use."

Questions About	Appropriate	Inappropriate
National Origin	Languages applicant reads, speaks, or writes, if use of a language other than English is relevant to the job for which applicant is applying.	Questions as to nationality, lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, or parentage of applicant, applicant's parents, or spouse. "What is your mother tongue?" or language commonly used by applicant. How applicant acquired ability to read, write, or speak a foreign language.
Sex, Marital Status, and Family	Statement of company policy regarding work assignment of employees who are related.	Questions which indicate applicant's sex. Questions which indicate applicant's marital status. Number and/or ages of children or dependents. Provisions for child care. Questions regarding pregnancy, child bearing, or birth control. Name and address of relative, spouse, or children of adult applicant. "With whom do you reside?"

The bottom line is this: you never want to put yourself (or anyone on your interview team) in a position where a candidate says, "That's an illegal question, and I am here to be interviewed about my experience and skills, not my personal life."

After the Interview

It's a good idea to take time to review each candidate's performance in the interview while it is all fresh in your mind. If you have a team interviewing, you should hold a team debriefing while the interview is fresh for everyone. Review the candidate's responses to each question, but also discuss (or think about) impressions and feelings. Sometimes intangibles and intuition are as valid as the results of a structured interview. Below are some sample questions to reflect on.

Sample post-interview reflection questions:

- Was the candidate's dress professional?
- Did the candidate arrive on time for the interview?
- Was the candidate able to answer express himself/herself well?
- What were the candidate's overall social skills (handshake, eye contact, personable, not overly anxious)?
- Was he/she able to respond to "tough" questions adequately?
- Were the candidate's questions to you thoughtful?
- Overall, did the answers demonstrate both a sense of professional competence and caring for children?

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Sample Memo to School Staff Regarding Telephone or Other Contact with Teacher Candidates

DATE:

TO: Office Staff

FROM: Principal

SUBJECT: Contact with Teacher Candidates

As you probably know, we have just begun the process of identifying, interviewing, and hiring new staff. To ensure that this process is fair to all candidates and that it is in accordance with legal requirements, it is important that anyone who has contact with candidates follows these guidelines:

Do not elaborate on the position when talking with candidates.

I have attached the position description for you to read to candidates who ask. I also have included our timeline for interviewing and hiring decisions. If candidates ask for information that is not in the description or timeline, politely explain that they will receive all pertinent information if asked to come for an interview.

Do not engage in personal conversation with candidates.

Do not talk about their family, their current job, their ethnicity, where they live, and so forth. As a general rule, be cordial, but businesslike, and only supply the essential information of position description and timeline. As we set up interviews, I will ask you to provide interviewees with additional scheduling information. Again, be cordially businesslike and only provide essential information.

Do not discuss candidates with any staff member.

It is important that we maintain confidentiality. Moreover, we want to avoid any possibility or any perception that we are prejudging candidates.

As a final note, your best bet is to use common sense and your own professionalism as we go through this process. If you have any questions, please ask me. And thank you for your cooperation.

cc: Interview Team

Interview Game Plan

Position: _____

Introductions and ice-breaker questions (introduce the candidate and interview team; explain the interview process; ask a question such as: Tell me one thing about your teaching experience or decision to become a teacher that is not on your resume.)

Additional questions:

_____

_____

Questions about:

- Curriculum and instruction (such as: What were some of the basic skills in mathematics that students learned in your classroom? Describe a social studies unit you have taught. Describe your classroom.)

_____

_____

_____

- Planning (such as: Tell me about your approach to planning units for your class. How did you divide large amounts of material to be covered? Tell me about a specific topic you taught last year. How did you organize this topic?)

_____

_____

_____

- Classroom organization and management (such as: Tell me how you establish rules of behavior in your classroom at the beginning of the year. Tell me about a time when your classroom management plan worked well for you. Tell me about a time when your management plan did not work and students misbehaved or were not motivated.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

- Homework and grading (such as: What amounts and types of homework did you assign in the grade you taught last year? Explain your grading system to me, assuming I am a student.)

- Meeting individual student needs (such as: Tell me about a time when you worked with students who were not native speakers of English. Tell me about your work with special needs students. What are some of the instructional approaches you have used to help all children in your classroom succeed?)

- Communication with parents, colleagues, and administrators (such as: Describe how you have conducted a parent conference. Have you worked with parent volunteers in your classroom? Tell me about it. Tell me about a situation where you approached your principal with a request. Tell me about a time when you co-taught, planned, or collaborated with another teacher.)

- Professional growth (such as: What do you read to keep current in your field? What conferences or workshops have you attended outside of school? What aspect of your teacher education program do you feel best prepared you for teaching?)

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- Open-ended questions to allow the candidate time to share strengths and experiences (including questions such as: Is there something that you prepared for this interview that you have not yet had a chance to share? Why do you want this job, at this school, with this grade level?)

- Selling your school and district (ask whether the candidate has any questions and be prepared to highlight positive aspects of your school and district)

- Concluding the interview (provide information about the timeline/process that will be used to complete the hiring process; thank the candidate for coming)

- Post-interview reflection by the interview team including questions (such as: Was the candidate's dress professional? Did the candidate arrive on time for the interview? Was the candidate able to answer express himself/herself well? Was he/she able to respond to "tough" questions adequately? Were the candidate's questions to you thoughtful? Overall, did the answers demonstrate both a sense of professional competence and caring for children?)

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Notes, Reminders, and Ideas:

Why the Hiring Process Is Just the Beginning

In the world of teaching, there is very little room for salary negotiations. Most districts have contracts with teachers that detail the exact pay for each new hire, based on experience, training, certification, and degree. Many teacher contracts also do not allow for other kinds of negotiations: location of room, type of computer(s), non-teaching assignments, and the like. So it is likely that much of your new teachers' work environment and salary will have been set, and that part of the hiring process is one over which you don't have much control. If you have been candid, candidates should know exactly what their jobs and salaries will be. Yet it is worth your while to do a little extra to make your new hires feel welcome and valued even before they start.

Keep new hires continuously informed about happenings in the district before they arrive. Send them information about real estate agents, apartments, community services, and things to do. (See page 57 for a sample welcome letter.) See if you can help them get settled, too. New teachers who are still apartment seeking, or still trying to get their phone or water hooked up, may not be as effective in the classroom as those who already have their personal living arrangements settled.

Likewise, make efforts to prepare your faculty for the new teachers. The best way to do this is clear communication. Make sure everyone knows class and room assignments as soon as possible. Let the veterans know where the new teachers will be located in the building, and encourage them to welcome (and help) their new colleagues. If necessary, arrange formal and informal get-togethers to show the new teachers they are part of your school's culture. And be especially alert for any indications of friction between new and veteran teaching staff.

Continued, Ongoing Support Is Called Induction

While it is generally a fact of life that new teachers will struggle somewhat, you can do your part to minimize the time and energy they spend struggling. Teachers

Support for New Teachers Is Cost-Effective

Nationally, 22 percent of all new teachers leave the profession in the first three years. A major factor has been identified as a "lack of support and a 'sink or swim' approach to induction" *Survival Guide for New Teachers,* U.S. Department of Education (2000).

Teachers who did not participate in an induction program in their schools or districts were nearly twice as likely to leave the classroom (20 percent) as those who had participated in such a program (11 percent). Both states and districts have begun to recognize the potential power of good induction programs; in 1999, 19 states mandated that districts offer induction programs to all beginning teachers (Olson 2000). Well-structured programs help ensure that the new teachers provide quality instruction to their students from the start, even as they build the competence that comes from actual classroom experience (Reynolds 1995). Program results from California and Texas also point to the cost-effectiveness of quality programs. As schools with good programs retain more beginning teachers, they can realize cost savings associated with hiring, orienting, and evaluating new teachers (National Association of State Boards of Education 2000).

who participate in planned, effective induction, support, and mentoring programs will feel less stress and alienation in the initial phases of their job, and probably will have more energy to put into their classroom teaching.

Installing a solid induction program that enables new teachers to ride out rough times has several benefits. New teachers will become more effective more rapidly. Veteran teachers will spend less time hand-holding and supporting new teachers. And by reducing the potential for early burnout of the new teachers, you may have to hire fewer teachers in the spring.

Induction is planned staff development for new teachers, and can include orientation, support groups, seminars, and mentoring. Your district and school need to evaluate your current practices for inducting and supporting new teachers, and then customize a program to ensure that your newly hired teachers feel supported during the critical first years in your district.

Sample Letter Welcoming New Teachers

Dear :

Welcome to *(school name)* and *(community name).* We are delighted you are joining our staff and coming to live in our community, and we are sure you will enjoy being here.

As a way to help you learn more about *(community name),* I am enclosing a "welcome wagon" information packet. It includes essential information about our community as well as helpful hints about community services and features. In it you will find:

(The following are examples of what might be included. You'll need to tailor what is in the packet according to your own community and according to what you believe will help your new teachers feel welcome.)

- A map of the community indicating where the new teacher's school and the other schools in the district are located
- A list of real estate agencies or rental agencies with addresses and telephone numbers
- Information about local libraries
- A community calendar showing cultural, social, and recreational events
- A list of public recreation or cultural institutions with contact information
- A list of doctors, dentists, and medical community facilities
- A list of churches, synagogues, mosques, and other houses of worship
- A list of social service agencies in the community with addresses and telephone numbers
- A list of service or community development organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Elks, Knights of Columbus, etc.
- A list of service stations for auto repair
- A list of child care providers
- Coupons from local merchants for products and services

We hope you will find this "welcome wagon" packet a helpful introduction to *(community name).* I know I speak for everyone in our community when I say that we look forward to having you here.

Sincerely,

As you review your current induction practices and introduce new ones, the following advice from two teachers who have "been there" might be helpful:

- **Provide administrative support and direction.**
  To succeed, new teachers need to know where to turn for help. Schedule one-on-one meetings with the administrator or faculty member whose responsibility it will be to foster, monitor, and celebrate the novice teacher's successes.

- **Welcome new teachers.**
  Early in the school year, new teachers, administrators, and veteran faculty members need time to share enthusiasm and allay new teachers' fears. Let the new teachers know you are happy to have them. Invite them into your community. Make them feel at home. Don't forget to identify people to whom they should direct questions, however small.

- **Maintain frequent contact.**
  As the school year begins, new teachers need forums in which they can ask questions and receive vital information. Meet with teachers on a regular basis, and give new teachers immediate feedback on classroom observations early in the school year.

- **Allow time for professional development and professional relationships.**
  Create opportunities for new teachers to discuss professional issues with veterans and administrators. Do not assume that conversations about methodology, procedures, and school culture and traditions will automatically take place informally. Support all teachers in their efforts to develop and pursue a plan of professional development (Heidkamp and Shapiro 1999).

In a similar vein, Brenda McInnis, just after her first year as a teacher in the Loudoun County, Virginia, schools, developed some suggestions for principals. They are provided as a checklist on page 59. Use the suggestions and add ideas of your own to the list. Remember, quality support for new teachers pays off for the teacher, for students, and, ultimately, for you.

The Value of Mentoring

When most administrators hear the words "teacher induction," they usually think of mentoring—assigning a veteran teacher to a new teacher to help him or her "learn the ropes" during the first year. Mentoring can be a valuable tool for helping new teachers.

SUPPORTING NEW TEACHERS: A TO-DO CHECKLIST	
Done?	**Task**
	Stress practicality in the information you supply to beginning teachers. Although these questions may be addressed in procedural guides, the beginning teacher may not have the time to read them. Address these concerns verbally and in concise written form for easy reference.
	Get district curriculum goals, objectives, and time requirements to new teachers as soon as possible after they are hired to help them in planning.
	Designate a central person in the school to whom the beginning teacher can turn with questions about equipment, supplies, and school procedures.
	Prevent the beginning teacher's isolation by stressing that colleagues need to give him/her support, time, and encouragement.
	Recognize the beginning teacher's apprehensions. Share "war stories" with beginning teachers to let them know that mistakes do happen to everyone and the important point is learning from them.
	Give the beginner an idea of how he/she is doing by providing feedback on his/her progress after a few weeks in the classroom, and then providing very practical suggestions as to what is and what is not working. Be sure to provide encouragement and reinforcement often.
	Faculty meetings can be confusing for new teachers—for instance, when the discussion uses acronyms or abbreviations for the names of programs and series. Provide a handout with an explanation of these terms, current projects, and other pertinent information.
	Remember how vulnerable new teachers can feel and how hard it can be for them to ask questions. Do everything that you can to assure them that questions are not a sign of incompetence or weakness.
	Recognize the extra work that new teachers must do and the extra stress that they experience. Give new teachers every break possible with their workload, while still making sure that they participate in the larger community of the school.
	Encourage new teachers to express their opinions in faculty meetings and in discussions with you and other colleagues.
	Assign a mentor—and do it as early as possible in the school year.

Mentoring Programs Attract New Teachers

Among new teacher candidates interviewed by a *Boston Globe* reporter at Massachusetts' largest education job fair, mentoring programs were high on their wish lists. Nearly every district attending the event touted one.

Doreen Iudica Vigue, *The Boston Globe* (April 20. 2000).

Carl O'Connell reports that the Mentor Program in Rochester, New York, is "used directly in our efforts to attract potential teachers and often a deciding factor" for the candidates.

NEA Virtual Conference on Recruiting and Retaining Teachers (2000)

However, a lot depends on the mentor: on how available he or she is, how well he or she knows the specifics of the school and grade level of the new teacher, and how willing he or she is to serve as a sounding board for new ideas. A good mentor can help a new teacher by sharing effective teaching strategies, classroom management ideas, and resources. An ineffective mentor will only increase frustration. So match the mentor and protegé carefully. In the best mentor and new teacher protegé pairings, both teachers learn from each other, support each other, and build a collegial friendship.

In addition to formal or informal mentoring relationships, you should pay attention to the more general connections between new and experienced teachers. As the principal, you have to recognize the potential power of these to help your new teachers develop.

Importance of Support for New Teachers

One award-winning first-year teacher characterized supportive veteran colleagues as a "lifeline to information and sanity," while new teachers in general were "discouraged" by lack of support from experienced teachers (*Survival Guide for New Teachers*, U.S. Department of Education 2000).

Notes, Reminders, and Ideas:

Conclusion

Frequently, supervisors of student teachers are asked to complete assessments of these novices for the school districts where they work. Many times the forms include the question, "Would you want this applicant teaching your child?" This question really makes the point. In the final analysis you, as the principal, have to answer this question when recruiting, interviewing, and selecting new teachers.

Obviously, you want qualified, caring adults teaching students. You want teachers who know how to teach, know how to motivate, know how to communicate, and know how to organize and manage a classroom. You also want teachers who know their subject matter, who are enthusiastic, creative, inspirational, and professional in every way. Most importantly, you want teachers to be role models.

Because you want only the best, hiring and keeping excellent teachers can be a daunting, stressful, and challenging task. We hope however, that the insights and tools we have presented in this *Essentials for Principals* guide will help you to keep the process of finding outstanding teachers manageable—maybe even enjoyable. Most of all, we hope it will help you succeed in your efforts to staff your school with high-quality teachers who will have successful students.

Good luck in your searches, interviews, and induction programs.

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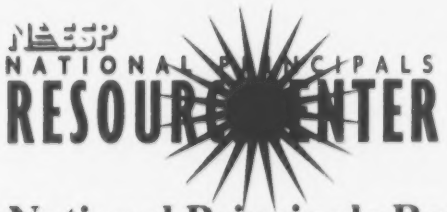

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